DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 417 CE 068 118

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TITLE Transitioning from School to Work: Programming for an Alternative School for At-Risk Adolescents.
PUB DATE Dec 94
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the American Vocational Association Convention (Dallas, TX, December 9-13, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Modification; *Community Services; Demonstration Programs; Dropout Prevention; Education Work Relationship; *High Risk Students; High Schools; Integrated Curriculum; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Nontraditional Education; Potential Dropouts; Vocational Education; *Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS Portsmouth School Administrative Unit NH

ABSTRACT

The Portsmouth (New Hampshire) Alternative Secondary School (PASS) has been developed for at-risk students who need a self-contained educational program with a community educational approach. This model program is based on the need for students to experience individual growth and success in the areas of academics, therapeutics, behavior management, vocational and community service education with an additional emphasis on outdoor education. A strong family counseling component addresses home and school issues as well as personal/family issues, conflict resolution, communication issues, and self-esteem building. The program allows students to remain in the Seacoast area and be educated via an individual education plan. The 8-week "theme" curriculum is designed with an interdisciplinary approach that includes core academic courses, electives, and vocational and community service opportunities. In addition to a wide variety of therapies that the program offers, students and families are required to obtain outside mental health family counseling. A structured behavioral management system addresses student target behaviors, personal goal setting, and appropriate behaviors. A mandated 20 hours of community service is represented by a student being placed in a work experience program in the community. (Attachments include strategies for transitioning at-risk adolescents, criteria for placement, and exit criteria.) (YLB)

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Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School
PASS
Portsmouth, NH

American Vocational Association
Annual Convention
Dallas, Texas

December 9-13, 1994

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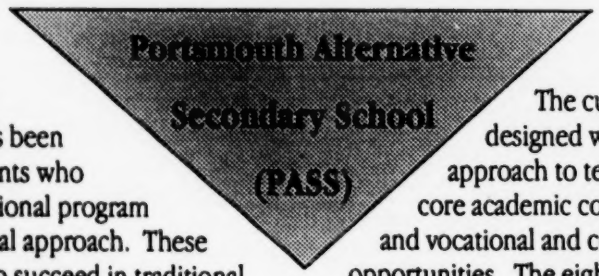
Transitioning From School to Work: Programming for an Alternative School For At-Risk Adolescents

by: Dr. Robert Lister



The Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School (PASS) has been developed for "at-risk" students who need a self-contained educational program with a community educational approach. These students have been unable to succeed in traditional middle or high school programs.

This model program is based on the need for students to experience individual growth and success in the areas of academics, therapeutics, behavior management, vocational and community service education with an additional emphasis on outdoor education. The alternative school program offers academic instruction by certified, well-experienced teachers in all core subjects to enable the students to acquire all needed credits toward graduation. Teachers use experiential learning and cooperative teaching which address appropriate student outcomes. There is a strong family counseling component to address home and school issues as well as personal/family issue, conflict resolution, communication issues, and self esteem building.

This program allows students to remain in the Seacoast area and be educated via an Individual Education Plan (IEP), avoiding the need for school districts to pursue expensive out-of-state day or residential placements. A collaborative agreement exists between agencies that include, but are not limited to, Seacoast Mental Health, juvenile courts, and the New Heights Recreation Program.

This model program is based on the need for students to experience individual growth and success in: academics, study skills, therapeutics, behavior management, and vocational and community service education. The alternative program offers academics through an integrated curriculum.

The curriculum at PASS is designed with an interdisciplinary approach to teaching which includes the core academic courses, a number of electives, and vocational and community service opportunities. The eight week "theme" curriculum provides short term goal setting and achievement, group learning and additional ways to assess student learning and potential. Students have the opportunity to feel successful about their accomplishments and, at the same time, addresses learning deficits. Within each module, a project is developed for students to learn at their individual levels. Examples of the eight-week modules include: children's literature, Europe, writing, directing and presenting a short play and multicultural education. The educational material is presented through several class assignments, community service projects, local speakers and field trips and projects individually designed by students that allow them to exhibit creativity, use their decision making skills and make a class presentation. The integrated curriculum gives the students a hands-on learning experience, which is transferable to other environments and beneficial to their personal, family and community involvement. This design provides students with opportunities to develop a positive image and build self esteem while at the same time enhancing academic strength, taking full advantage of their learning style.

The focus of Community Learning is a major component of each student's education plan and occurs within the community. The goal of the PASS Program is to return students to their high school/ community at the most appropriate time, build family relationships, appropriate behavior and personal responsibility.

The PASS Program offers students a wide variety of therapies. Group/individual counseling is provided

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daily as part of the curriculum. Therapeutic issues students focus on include: communication skills, problem solving skills, and conflict management techniques, which build self esteem, trust, and positive peer relations. In addition to daily group work and an extensive experiential educational program, students and families are required to obtain and participate in outside mental health family counseling. A structured behavioral management system addresses student target behaviors, personal goal setting and appropriate behaviors. Students are held accountable for their actions within a system of privileges and consequences; they learn personal responsibility through daily interactive work with peers, teachers and therapists.

Throughout the duration of a student's placement at the PASS Program, they are completing courses accruing high school credit toward graduation. No student can return to the high school until all exit criteria have been completed.

Mentorships in the community have been developed with several organizations that include the Lions and Rotary Clubs. Presently, students are placed for two to five hours per week with individuals who volunteer. They represent an attorney, accountant, auto mechanic, pet store owner, greenhouse business, and a prenatal clinic. Each placement represents a supervised, structured experience.

A mandated twenty hours of community service is represented by a student being placed working in a nursing home/hospital, preschool program, Public Works Department, with AIDS Response, the elderly, Special Olympics, and other nonprofit organizations that provide a work experience outside the school environment. All students have access to computers, drama and art in addition to the core curriculum. Some students attend classes on a limited daily basis at Portsmouth High School. In these individualized cases, they are monitored daily by the PASS faculty.

All students are identified as "at-risk". Not all, however, are identified as special needs students and have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Each student has a set of student outcomes and a plan for assessing their growth and performance.

The PASS faculty are expected to attend on-going staff development activities which will enhance their professional skills. Areas have included communication, teaching strategies, restraint training, conflict management, Project Adventure, learning styles, personal goal setting, classroom management, curriculum development, the writing process and alternative student assessment.

The following is an example of a typical student schedule:

7:05	**Arrival**
7:15 - 7:30	**Breakfast**
7:30 - 8:30	**Group (All students and staff)**
8:30 - 8:40	**Supervised Break**
8:40 -12:00	**Academics**
12:00 -12:45	**Lunch and Supervised Break**
12:45 -	**Worksites, mentorship placements, recreation programs, individual/ family therapy**

There is an ongoing collaboration between the PASS Program and the Technical/Career courses. An assessment is completed prior to enrollment with specific outcomes listed for all service delivery providers.

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STRATEGIES FOR TRANSITIONING AT-RISK ADOLESCENTS

NOTES

1. Develop collaborations/partnerships in the community
2. Grantwriting - know sources, "buzz words", and priorities of funding sources
3. Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
4. Open House - display students' work, exhibits
5. Job shadowing
6. Develop academic programs that are needed to prepare students
7. Mentorships
8. Student resumes
9. Provide community service options
10. Have an Advisory Committee
11. Network with other programs
12. Others:

PORTSMOUTH ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Criteria for Placement

Prior to a student being enrolled in the PASS Program, the following criteria will be followed:

1. All options for service and classroom modifications have been exhausted from the sending school, (i.e. abbreviated schedule, counseling, after-school makeup, class changes, etc.).
2. Recommendation for placement will be decision of high school placement team, involving appropriate individuals.
3. Student and families will participate in an intake interview at PASS.
4. The student will visit PASS for a half day prior to placement decision.
5. Student must have failed three out of five classes in their sending high school.
6. Significant learning/academic disabilities have been ruled out.
7. Student is not suicidal, severely depressed and/or does not have a history of fire setting and is at least of average intelligence as indicated by testing.
8. All pertinent testing and evaluations are current and available for review by PASS faculty.

Student will:

1. Be enrolled at beginning of a quarter.
2. Make a commitment to the program (family must also agree).
3. Be involved in out-of-school counseling (private or local mental health center).

If student is enrolled in PASS, he/she will not reenroll at the high school program until he/she has shown marked improvement in academics and behavior over a sustained period of time. A recommendation must be made by the high school principal and PASS faculty.

Exit Criteria

In order for students to return to the high school program, they must:

1. Have an average grade of "C" or better.
2. Complete 20 hours of community service.
3. Have personal/work resume completed.
4. Complete a mentorship in the community related to employment/job training.
5. Have a recommendation from the high school principal and PASS faculty.
6. Be involved in a brief transition period from PASS to the high school.